

### REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 11, 2003. Claims 1 to 23, 25 to 46 and 49 to 90 are in the application, of which Claims 1, 25, 46, 50, 51, 54 to 56 and 70 are the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The Abstract of the Disclosure has been rewritten to address the issue raised in the Office Action. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the Abstract is respectfully requested.

Claim 45, which was withdrawn from consideration pursuant to a restriction requirement, has been cancelled without prejudice to Applicants' right to present this claim in a later-filed divisional application.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that Claims 1 to 23 and 51 have been allowed. Claim 2 has been amended to improve antecedence. The remaining allowed claims have not been amended herein. Thus, Claims 1 to 23 and 51 are believed to remain in condition for allowance.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that Claims 48 to 56 contain allowable subject matter. In keeping with this indication, Claim 46 has been amended to include the subject matter of Claim 48, with Claims 47 and 48 being cancelled; Claim 49 has been amended to depend from Claim 46; and Claims 50, 54 to 56 have been rewritten in independent form. With respect to Claim 50, this claim did not depend from a rejected base claim, as contended in the Office Action. Rather, Claim 50 depended from allowed Claim 1. However, Claim 50 has been amended to include the subject matter of original Claim 46,

since it is believed that the Office Action's indication of allowable subject matter in Claim 50 was predicated on Claim 50's dependency from Claim 46. In view of the foregoing, independent Claims 46, 50, 51 and 54 to 56, together with their dependent Claims 49, 52, 53 and 57 to 69, are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 24, which was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over JP 11-233803 (JP '803) and under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,166,319 (Matsuyama '319), has been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of subject matter presented therein and without conceding the correctness of the rejections.

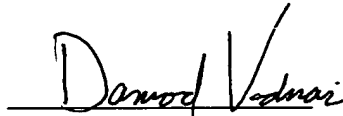
Non-elected process Claims 25 and 70 have been amended to include all the features of elected product Claims 1 and 46, respectively. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of non-elected Claims 25 to 44 and 70 to 90, pursuant to MPEP § 821.04.

Turning to a formal matter, Applicants have not yet received an indication that the documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement dated September 17, 2002 have been considered and made formally of record. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner indicate that the documents have been considered and made formally of record by returning an initialled copy of the Form PTO-1449 that accompanied the Information Disclosure Statement. A copy of the Form PTO-1449 is enclosed, for the Examiner's convenience.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Damond Vadnais", written over a horizontal line.

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